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ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of a study of the ways in which federal education programs have affected the work of school principals. A total of 55 principals in six states were interviewed either in person or by telephone. The principals provided approximately equal representation by school level and size. The majority of respondents were selected because of their experience with federal programs, but a small number of principals whose schools do not operate any federal programs were interviewed. In general, principals are now more constrained by rules, more subject to public scrutiny, and less in control of their own schedules, than they were five years ago. Nearly all of them mentioned increases in three activities: preparing paperwork, consulting with parents, and coping with students' noninstructional needs. Federal programs contributed to the changes in principals' jobs, but so did many other factors. Principals who must cope with the most severe student and community needs must also carry the heaviest aggregate burden of federal program requirements. The key to improving federal policy is to find ways to avoid putting the greatest administrative burdens on the people who are already under the greatest stress. (Author/MLF)

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PREFACE

This Note was prepared as one of the tasks of The Rand Corporation's Education Policy Development Center, under a contract with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Education for Policy Development. In response to requests from the U.S. Department of Education, the Center conducts research on federal programming and regulatory strategies in elementary and secondary education.

This study was requested by the Secretary of Education; its exact objectives and design were established by Rand staff working in collaboration with James Vanecko, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy Development.

The authors are indebted to Susan Abramowitz of the National Institute of Education, who provided special tabulations used in parts of the reports, and Margaret Thomas of Rand, who made important comments and suggestions about an early draft of this Note.

SUMMARY

This Note presents the results of a small exploratory study of how federal education programs have affected the work of school principals. The study asked three questions:

1. How has the principal's job changed in the past five years?
2. To what degree have federal programs caused the changes in the principal's job?
3. To what degree can the changes be reversed or compensated for by changing federal programs?

FINDINGS

Changes in the Principal's Job

Principals were virtually unanimous in saying that their jobs have become more demanding.

Principals are now more constrained by rules, more subject to public scrutiny, and less in control of their own schedules, than they were five years ago. Principals are now busy managers who work long hours, delegate responsibility whenever possible, and fight to keep control over their own schedules.

Tasks that Have Increased in Importance

Most principals mentioned increases in three activities--paperwork, consultation with parents, and coping with students' noninstructional needs.

Paperwork has increased. Principals' estimates of the time it requires varied, from over half-time to only four hours per week, averaging 25 percent or ten hours per week. The paperwork burden depends on the number of separate state and federal programs the principal must administer, how well school districts

screen their principals from paperwork, and whether the school has any other administrative staff to assist the principal.

Many principals report that individual parents demand more time and attention than ever before. Principals' estimates of the time they spend working with such groups vary widely, from a minimum of two or three hours per week to a maximum of one day per week.

Schools, and therefore principals, are increasingly responsible for students' noninstructional needs. Principals cited student discipline problems, the need to monitor students' health and nutrition, and increased demands for custodial care, especially for children from households where no adults are home in the daytime.

Large minorities of our respondents also attributed some of the changes in their jobs to other activities, including:

- Fulfilling their obligations under the school district's collective bargaining agreement with teachers.
- Coordinating federal programs within the school.
- Dealing with program monitors and review teams from the school district's central office staff, and the state education agency.

Changes in the Instructional Leadership Role

A majority of respondents reported that they now spend less time supervising instruction. However, many reported that the decreases were small, and that they were still able to meet the minimum requirements of the job. In addition, a large minority of the principals reported spending the same amount or more time now than five years ago, supervising the instructional process in their schools. Principals may play the instructional leadership role differently now. They are more bound to a schedule, less able to interact spontaneously with teachers and students, and more rushed in those interactions that do take place. But the

new pressures of the job have not driven principals out of the business of instructional leadership.

School principals now have busier days, do more night work, have less discretionary time, endure more scrutiny and criticism, and have less autonomy than they did five years ago. In that environment, some find themselves unable to concentrate on instructional issues as much as they would like.

How Much of the Change is Due to Federal Programs

Many of the activities that principals report have changed their jobs are not directly required by federal programs. In fact, principals from schools that do not have federal programs also report that their jobs are more complex now than five years ago.

Many of the changes in the principal's job may be necessary responses to students' needs and to changes in society's expectations for the schools. Without some such changes in the principal's job, the schools' response to student and community needs might have been far less effective than it has been.

Implications for Federal Policy

Federal programs contributed to the changes in principals' jobs, but so did many other factors. It is therefore unlikely that the federal government could reverse the changes, even if it were desirable to do so.

Though the potential effects of federal policy are limited, two basic questions about federal policy are still worth asking:

- Is it possible, by changing or eliminating certain features of federal programs, to lighten some of the burdens that principals must carry?
- Is there any way the federal government can help principals carry the burdens that cannot be reduced or eliminated?

The difficulty of the principal's work increases with the number of federal programs in the school. Principals in low-income and minority group schools, who must respond to the most severe student and community needs, must also carry the heaviest aggregate burden of federal program requirements. Principals in such schools unanimously reported that they could not serve their students' needs without the federal programs. Eliminating federal programs is thus no solution. The key to improving federal policy is to find ways to stop putting the greatest administrative burdens on the people and places that are already under the greatest stress.

The question for further analysis is: is it necessary for schools that serve severely disadvantaged populations to have several parent advisory groups, keep several different sets of records and accounts, and implement services separately for each federal program? That question can, of course, be answered only if it is clear what purpose the existing requirements are meant to serve. Judging from the results of our study, those purposes are not clear, at least not to principals.

Helping Principals Handle Their Responsibilities

Even if the federal government is able to simplify its requirements, principals will still face complex problems imposed by public needs and expectations. There may be an additional role for the federal government to play in helping principals understand and cope with their new duties. To establish that role, the federal government must first get the answers to the following questions:

- Which principals have the most difficulty responding to the changes in their jobs? Do they have particular kinds of training and experience, or are they simply the ones that face the most complex problems with the least adequate administrative support?

- What skills are crucial in responding to the changes in the principal's job? How do the principals who report little trouble adjusting to their new tasks operate differently from principals who are less able to cope?
- Do the existing resources for training principals--i.e., the graduate schools of education and in-service training programs--teach the needed skills? How can the necessary training be developed and delivered to those who need it?

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I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

This Note presents the results of a study of the ways in which federal education programs have affected the work of school principals. The study was requested by the Secretary of Education, who wanted to know whether the administrative burdens imposed by federal programs and regulations had changed the very nature of the principal's job.

The Secretary's question reflects a broader public concern that government intervention may have affected the schools in ways that no one intended. In the past fifteen years, since Congress enacted its first major program of aid to elementary and secondary education, the federal government has established programs of grants and civil rights enforcement intended to benefit a large number of disadvantaged groups. The growth of federal requirements has been especially swift in the past five years.[1] Federal laws and regulations now govern such diverse aspects of school life as providing compensatory education for students in low-income schools, tailoring educational services to fit the needs of handicapped students and students with limited English-speaking ability, promoting educational equity for females, and protecting students' rights to privacy and due process. Each of these requirements responds to a real need, and

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[1] Schools are affected by a large number of new laws and regulations established since 1975 including: regulations prohibiting discrimination based on sex (45 CFR 86, June 5, 1975); regulations prohibiting discrimination against the handicapped (45 CFR 84, May 4, 1977); regulations governing schools' use of tests (45 CFR 99, June 17 1976); regulations implementing the Privacy Act (45 CFR 5b, October 8, 1975); and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142; regulations published as 45 CFR 121a, August 23, 1977). The Department of Health, Education and Welfare is now also drafting regulations concerning the education of limited English-speaking, implementing the principles established by the Supreme Court in the case of Lau v. Nichols 44 CFR 463 (1974).

has strong support among the beneficiary groups. In the aggregate, however, they put a very complex administrative burden on a very simple organization, the school; responsibility for devising and managing the school's response ultimately falls on the principal. The principal must understand all of the relevant requirements, organize and supervise the school staff's response, submit evidence of compliance to district, state, and federal officials, and deal with parent and citizen advisory groups.

Within any school, the quality of services or protection enjoyed by federal program beneficiaries depends heavily on the principal's actions. The principal is also responsible, of course, for the quality of the school's regular instructional program. All the students in a school are therefore affected by the principal's performance in integrating federal requirements with the regular school instructional program.

QUESTIONS FOR RESEARCH

At the core of the Secretary's request for this study is a single question: Have federal program requirements made it more difficult for principals to fulfill their responsibilities to the schools' regular instructional program? To guide our analyses, we divided that question into three parts:

1. How has the principal's job changed in the past five years? In particular, is the principal now forced to spend more time administering federal programs, and less time supervising the school's instructional program, than before?
2. To what degree have federal programs caused the changes in the principal's job? Could any of the changes be due to forces other than federal programs?
3. To what degree can the changes be reversed or compensated for by changing federal programs?

As the following section will make clear, this study was too small and was done too quickly to answer these questions definitively. It can, however, improve our understanding of the changes in principals' jobs, and help the Secretary and others to appreciate some of the effects and limitations of federal policy.

TIMING AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study began in mid-January 1980 and was completed one month later by Rand researchers based in Santa Monica. Research questions were established in collaboration with James Vanecko, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Education Policy Development, and with the Secretary's staff. Starting with the research questions, we developed a simple list of topics for discussion with principals who have had varying degrees of experience with federal programs. We then assembled a conference of principals from California to comment on our plans for telephone interviews, help us further refine the research objectives, and suggest lines of questioning to be used in telephone interviews with other principals around the country.

All the interviews took place between January 25 and February 5, 1980. We met with or interviewed by telephone a total of 55 principals in six states. The principals came from all regions of the country, and provided approximately equal representation of large, middle-sized, and small school districts, and of principals in elementary, middle, and senior high schools. The majority of respondents were selected because of their experience with federal programs, but for purposes of comparison we interviewed a small number of principals whose schools do not operate any federal programs.

Our interviews thus provided a broad sampling of principals' experience. Although our sampling procedure guarantees that the results are not dominated by the experience of only one kind of state or school district, the sample is too small to warrant confident generalizations to the nation as a whole. The results can be used to sharpen and discipline our thinking--to help

identify the range of possible ways in which federal programs can affect principals, and to learn whether particular problems are universal or present only in a minority of schools. In short, the results reported below can help us understand the problem better, but cannot be taken as definitive or final answers to the research questions.

OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The rest of this Note consists of three sections corresponding to the three research questions listed on p. 2. Section II presents findings on recent changes in the principal's job. Section III provides evidence about the degree to which the changes in the principal's job can be attributed to federal programs. Section IV discusses possible implications of the findings for federal policy.

II. CHANGES IN THE PRINCIPAL'S JOB

We asked principals to discuss their jobs in three ways: first, to give a general description of the ways in which their jobs have changed in the past five years; second, to identify specific activities that had increased or decreased in importance over that period; and third, to report specifically on whether they had been forced to reduce or abandon their efforts to supervise teachers and work with students. This section reports the patterns of response to those questions.

CHANGES IN THE PRINCIPAL'S JOB

Principals were virtually unanimous in saying that their work has become more demanding. All three aspects of the principal's job--managing the internal operation of the school, working with teachers on the planning of instruction, and dealing with parents and the community--have become more complex.[2] Within the school, the principal must coordinate the work of a growing number of instructional specialists, itinerant teachers who divide their time among two or more schools, and teacher's aides. In dealing with each of those groups, and with students, he or she must take account of the regulations, due process guarantees, court orders, and local contract provisions that establish the groups' rights and obligations. The principal must also deal with local district administrators, federal and state officials who offer technical assistance or conduct compliance reviews, and parent advisory councils that monitor the operation of programs targeted to special groups of students.

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[2]This typology of the principal's role is taken from Susan Abramowitz and Ellen Tenenbaum, High School '77: A Survey of Public Secondary School Principals, The National Institute of Education, Washington, D.C., 1978. Data from that survey, which produced responses from a nationally representative sample of 1,448 high school principals, are used whenever possible to supplement our results.

In general, principals are now more constrained by rules, more subject to public scrutiny, and less in control of their own schedules, than they were five years ago. If the principal's job ever was one of professional autonomy or academic isolation, it no longer is. Principals are now busy managers who work long hours, juggle competing pressures, delegate responsibility whenever possible, and fight a losing battle to keep control over their own schedules. These generalizations, however, cover some interesting variations in the kinds of demands that different principals face. The next subsection will report the different patterns of response to our question about tasks that have increased or decreased in importance in the past five years.

TASKS THAT HAVE INCREASED IN IMPORTANCE

Our respondents did not unanimously identify any one change in their jobs as the most important. Nearly all of them, however, mentioned increases in three activities: preparing paperwork, consulting with parents, and coping with students' noninstructional needs.

Virtually all of our respondents cited paperwork as a source of change in their jobs. Their estimates of the paper workload ranged widely, however, from nearly half-time to only two or three hours per week; the mean estimate was 25 percent or ten hours per week.[3] This wide range is due to several factors: most states and districts impose paperwork burdens of their own; some school districts screen their principals from paperwork far more effectively than others; some principals are more successful than others in delegating (or ignoring) paperwork requirements;

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[3]Compare Abramowitz and Tenenbaum, op. cit., who asked high school principals to rate the severity of problems caused by federal paperwork. A total of 42 percent of their respondents rated the problems imposed by federal paperwork as serious or very serious, and 58 percent rated them as minor or no problem at all. Fifty-one percent of the principals from schools that had Title I and at least one other compensatory program rated paperwork problems as serious or very serious, compared to 37 percent of the principals whose schools had no such programs.

and some federal programs require especially large amounts of paperwork.

Local factors make it difficult to judge exactly how much paperwork is due to federal programs. ESEA Title I, which requires a separate set of financial records, and the Education for All Handicapped Students Program, which requires the school to implement an individualized education plan for every handicapped child, clearly impose the largest direct burdens. The total amount of paperwork imposed by any program, however, depends greatly on local choices about the management and delivery of instruction. Some schools base their instructional programs on formal diagnostic and prescriptive techniques that require extensive pre- and post-testing and record keeping. Federal programs do not mandate the use of those techniques, but local school officials can use the records to prove that individual students received special services. Principals tend, therefore, to attribute all of the diagnostic and prescriptive paperwork to federal programs.

Consultation with parents is one new burden on principals that stems in part from federal and state programs. ESEA Title I, the earliest and largest federal program, has required district-wide parent advisory councils (PACs) since 1965, and school-level councils since 1975. Other federal and state programs have followed suit. In California, for example, a given school can have separate advisory councils for Title I, Title VII, and the state's School Improvement Program, as well as the regular PTA organization. In addition, schools must involve the parents of each handicapped child in preparing the child's Individualized Education Plan.

Principals' estimates of the time they spend working with such groups vary widely, from a minimum of less than one hour per week to a maximum of over 16 hours per week. Time requirements obviously vary with the number of separate advisory councils that must be consulted. Parents' attitudes toward participation in the councils are another important determinant

of time requirements. Some principals complained that they must hunt for parents to attend meetings; others complained that separate advisory groups intrude on one another's jurisdictions and cause time-consuming conflicts. Most principals expressed support of the objectives of PACs, but many complained about the burdens imposed by requiring separate groups for each program.

Responding to students' noninstructional needs is the third activity that most principals reported as having changed their jobs. They believe that their burden of responsibility for students' health and welfare is significantly heavier than it was five years ago. The exact nature of that new responsibility varies from place to place. Principals in low-income areas cited student discipline problems and the need to monitor students' health and nutrition. Principals in middle- and higher-income areas were more likely to cite increased demands for custodial care, especially for children from households where no adults are at home in the daytime. In both cases, principals believe that their problems are exacerbated by recent court decisions that establish students' rights to due process in matters affecting discipline and expulsion.

No other class of activities was cited as often as the three listed above. Large minorities of our respondents, however, attribute some of the changes in their jobs to other activities, including:

- Fulfilling the responsibilities established by the school district's collective bargaining agreement with teachers. This is a time-consuming task for many principals, and many reported that it also made day-to-day working relationships with teachers more formal and distant.[4]

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[4]For a more complete discussion of the effects of teacher collective bargaining on the relationship between principals and teachers, see Lorraine McDonnell and Anthony Pascal, Organized Teachers in American Schools, The Rand Corporation, R-2407-NIE, February 1979.

- Coordinating special programs within the school. This includes reviewing decisions to assign students to remedial and advanced programs, arranging the movement of students to and from special classes, and supervising the work of specialist teachers and aides. The weight of this reponsibility varies widely, depending on the number of federal and state programs in the school, the number of students involved, and the degree to which the school delivers special services outside the regular classroom.
- Consulting with the school district's central office staff. Some of this activity is covered under paperwork; it includes preparing annual plans for the use of federal and state grant money, reporting on the use of funds, and evaluating students' academic achievement. In addition to paperwork, however, principals must be instructed in the meaning of new regulatory requirements, and prepare for possible site visits from federal or state program monitors. Principals responsible for several programs must keep up to date on several different sets of regulations. In larger districts they must deal with several district coordinators, one for each federal program.

CHANGES IN THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP ROLE

We expected that all of the new burdens reported above would interfere with principals' ability to supervise teachers and deal with students. That expectation was borne out. Most of our respondents reported that they now spend less time supervising instruction. To our surprise, however, many of them reported that the decreases were small, and that they are still able to fulfill what they regarded as the minimum requirements of the job. In addition, a large minority reported spending the same amount of time or more time supervising the instructional process now than five years ago. This is corroborated by tabulations

provided by Abramowitz and Tenenbaum, which show that principals in schools with Title I and other compensatory programs do no less classroom observation than principals in schools with no such programs. Approximately 40 percent of both groups reported observing in their classroom several times a week. Many principals asserted that the instructional leadership role is the core of the job and cannot be sacrificed. Some said that they had delegated other functions (including paperwork, discipline, and consultation with parents) to teachers and vice principals, in order to make time for running the instructional program. From some of the responses it is apparent that principals may perform that role differently now.[5] They may be more bound to a schedule, less able to interact spontaneously with teachers and students, and more rushed in those interactions that do take place. But the new pressures of the job have not driven principals out of the business of instructional leadership.

Unfortunately, the small size of our sample prevents us from learning whether there are any systematic differences between principals who now spend less time supervising instruction and those who spend more or the same amount. We can speculate that noninstructional demands are less severe in schools that are small, have few special programs, or can afford specialized administrative help.

What emerges from all of our interviews is that school principals now have busier days, do more night work, have less discretionary time, endure more scrutiny and criticism, and have less autonomy than they did five years ago. In that environment, some find themselves unable to concentrate on instructional issues as much as they would like.

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[5]For a discussion of the ways in which principals' styles of instructional leadership can change under pressures from competing job requirements, see Margaret A. Thomas, A Study of Alternatives in American Education: Vol. II, The Role of the Principal, The Rand Corporation, R-2170/2-NIE, April 1978.

Whether those principals, or the students they serve, are any worse off for the change is beyond the scope of our small study. We can, however, shed light on a question that should be important to the federal government: To what degree are the changes caused by federal programs? That is the topic of Section III.

III. ASSESSING THE DIRECT EFFECT OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS

This section reviews the evidence about the degree to which federal programs have caused the changes in principals' jobs. In planning the study, we established two methods of making that assessment. The first was to review the activities that principals cited as sources of change in their jobs, and distinguish those that were clearly required by federal programs from those that were stimulated by other factors. The second was to compare the responses of principals from schools that do and do not have federal programs.

Both methods led us to conclude that federal programs are not the only important force changing the principal's job. As Sec. II illustrates, at least two of the activities that principals report have changed their jobs--responding to students' noninstructional needs and administering the school's collective bargaining agreement--are not directly required by federal programs.

The response to students' noninstructional needs includes an enormous range of activities--providing health screening, nutrition, clothing, and discipline; assuring students' physical safety; getting in touch with working parents to care for their children who become ill in school, and caring for those children until their parents become available. Some of those needs are the same ones that have stimulated the growth of federal education programs. They reflect changes in society and in public expectations for the schools that cannot all be attributed to federal programs.

Much the same can be said about teacher collective bargaining agreements. These agreements and the changes they create in principals' jobs reflect broad changes in the status of teachers as professionals and public employees. Issues about the staffing and administration of federal programs can become

entangled in teacher labor disputes, but federal programs did not create and do not govern collective bargaining.

Principals of schools that do not have federal programs reported that their jobs are more complex now than five years ago, and had changed in many of the same ways reported in Sec. II. Like principals of schools that have federal programs, they cited meeting students' noninstructional needs and administering teacher collective bargaining agreements as important new activities. Their estimates of the paperwork burden ranged from 10 percent to 50 percent of their time--only slightly less than the estimates made by federal program principals. Some also mentioned increased parent activism and coordination of the work of specialist teachers provided by district- or state-funded programs. These changes may be partly due to the indirect influence of federal programs. Some of them may reflect the fact that the designers of state and local programs have used federal programs as models. But many of the changes are clearly the results of public needs and expectations for the schools--demands for special services tailored to the needs of individual children, for consultation with parents, and for public accountability. Federal programs and regulations have focused attention on those needs and demands, but they did not create them.

Many of the changes in the principal's job may be healthy responses to the new roles and obligations of the schools. Without some such changes in the principal's job, the schools might have been far less responsive to student and community needs than they have been. Change--and principals' complaints about it--are not in themselves evidence that anything is wrong. Presumably, changes in the principal's job are not destructive unless they reduce the schools' ability to function, or render them less able to serve students.

Changes imposed by federal programs could have bad effects in two ways: first, by diverting principals' energies into tasks that are not productive for either the objectives of federal

programs or other goals of the school; and second, by piling more and more new tasks onto principals until they cannot manage the workload. The data from our study do not support any judgments about whether federal programs have done either one.

It is clear that federal programs have changed the principal's job by adding significant new requirements for instructional management, public consultation, and paperwork. It is not yet clear, however, whether all those requirements are necessary, or whether they impose an aggregate burden on school principals that is too great for them to carry.

Section IV discusses ways of resolving these uncertainties and other questions about the existing strategy of federal programming in education.

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR FEDERAL POLICY

Principals' jobs have changed over the past five years. Federal programs contributed to the changes; but because so many other factors also contributed, it is unlikely that the federal government could reverse the changes even if it were clearly desirable to do so.

Although the potential effects of federal policy are limited, two basic questions about federal policy are well worth asking:

- Is it possible, by changing or eliminating certain features of federal programs, to lighten the principals' burdens?
- Is there any way by which the federal government can help principals to cope with burdens that cannot be reduced or eliminated?

This section explores the implications of those questions for future analysis of federal policy.

CHANGING FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Principals reported that three federal program requirements have forced important changes in their jobs (see Sec. I): completing additional paperwork, consulting with parent advisory groups, and coordinating the actions of specialist teachers. These requirements are especially important because virtually every federal program imposes them in some form. The complexity of the principal's work increases with the number of federal programs in the school. Principals whose schools have two or more federal programs must deal with a correspondingly greater number of paperwork requests, parent groups, monitoring visits, and specialist teachers.

Because most federal programs are meant to serve students with special needs, principals in low-income and minority-group schools are likely to experience the effects of multiple requirements. In other words, principals who must cope with the most severe student and community needs must also carry the heaviest aggregate burden of federal program requirements.[6] Principals in such schools unanimously reported that they need the federal programs and have no choice but to shoulder the attendant administrative burdens. Eliminating federal programs is therefore no solution. The key to improving federal policy is to find ways to avoid putting the greatest administrative burdens on the people and places that are already under the greatest stress.

The question that should guide further analysis can be simply stated: Is it necessary for schools that serve severely disadvantaged populations to have several parent advisory groups, keep several sets of records and accounts, and implement services separately for each federal program? That question can be answered only if it is clear what purposes the existing requirements are meant to serve. Judging from the results of our study, those purposes are not clear, at least to principals. Most principals want to encourage parent involvement, but do not understand why they should have to deal with a separate group of parents for each federal program. Most principals believe that they should be held accountable for the use of funds, but do not

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[6]The management of multiple federal programs is a difficult problem for school districts, as well as schools. Like schools, local education agencies must administer federal programs separately, consult with advisory groups, prepare paperwork, and deal with federal and state program monitors. At both the school and the district level there is reason to question whether the separate federal programs compete with one another, and with the regular local instructional process, for funds and administrative resources. Under the sponsorship of the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Education Policy Development, Rand has just initiated a three-year study of the aggregate effects of federal education programs on schools and school districts. For an overview of the problems addressed in that study, see Paul T. Hill, Do Federal Programs Interfere with One Another? The Rand Corporation, P-6416, September 1979.

understand why every federal program needs its own set of reports. Most principals believe in tailoring services to individual students' needs, but do not understand why they must plan and manage separate instructional systems for responding to each separate need of a multiply-disadvantaged population.

Federal officials have plausible explanations for the requirements: Plans and reports are meant to establish the grounds for monitoring and audit processes, and to remind local school officials that they are accountable for the use of federal funds. Parent advisory councils are meant to stimulate parent interest in the schools and give parents of students served by federal programs the political leverage to ensure that funds are used for their children. Services from federal programs must be kept separate from regular instructional activities to ensure that federal money is not used to pay for activities that would otherwise be provided from local funds.

The requirements are ingenious ways of ensuring that the funds from any one federal program will be used for the intended beneficiaries. But they were developed separately for each program, as if it would be the only one that a particular school or district would have to implement. They may, in fact, still be entirely necessary in schools that receive federal funds from only one source. But the neediest schools are now typically receiving funds from at least two federal programs--and, in some places, from state categorical programs with similar requirements. Individual students in those schools are often eligible for services from as many as three federal programs.[7] Within such schools, it is not clear why each set of parents needs its own source of leverage, or why paperwork and service requirements need to be kept separate.

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[7]For a discussion of the overlap between ESEA Title I and PL 94-142 see Beatrice F. Birman, Case Studies of Overlap Between Title I and PL 94-142 Services for Handicapped Children, SRI International, Menlo Park, California, August 1979.

A careful examination is sorely needed of the purposes of these requirements, and of the possible costs and benefits of consolidating the structures of parent advice, paperwork, and service delivery in schools with multiple programs.

HELPING PRINCIPALS HANDLE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

Even if the federal government is able to simplify its requirements, principals will still face complex problems imposed by public needs and expectations. An additional role for the federal government may be to help principals understand and cope with their new duties. Few of the principals we interviewed had received any special training in federal program management, or management of collective bargaining agreements. School superintendents confirmed that principals are still being recruited in traditional ways--from the ranks of school teachers who have taken standard courses in eductional administration--without explicit reference to their ability to handle the new political and managerial aspects of the job.

Our study results indicate that some principals are finding the changes more difficult to handle than others. Unfortunately, our data are too limited to identify any systematic differences between those principals who need help and those that do not. To help principals, it is necessary to know both which ones are experiencing stress and how the others are overcoming it.

The foundation of any federal effort to help principals should be a program of research designed to answer the following questions:

- Which principals have the most difficulty responding to the changes in their jobs? Are they lacking in training and experience, or are they simply the ones that face the most complex problems with the least adequate administrative support?

- What skills are crucial in responding to the changes in the principal's job? How do the principals who report little trouble adjusting to their new tasks operate differently from principals who are unable to cope?
- Do the existing resources for training principals--i.e., the graduate schools of education and in-service training programs--impart the needed skills? How can the necessary training be developed and delivered to those who need it?

CONCLUSION

The principal's job is evidently more difficult and complex than it ever was before. Though many complain about the changes, most are adapting to them. The changes are rooted in real social needs and expectations, and probably cannot be reversed. The federal government can, however, do some things to reduce the complexity of the principal's job.